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SUBJECT: DART VISIT TO AD DIWANIYAH

SUMMARY

1. Four members of DART Field Team West traveled to Ad Diwaniyah, Qadisiyah governorate between 21 and 22 May. The DART met with the local Governorate Support Team, various CMOC members, the Director General of the MOH, a team of doctors from the local maternal/pediatric hospital, WFP, Iraqi Red Crescent, and DART implementing partner Mercy Corps.

2. Overall, Ad Diwaniyah is facing a situation similar to most other cities in the upper south. Basic services (electricity, water, health care, PDS, etc.) have returned to pre-war levels. However, these systems are vulnerable for a variety of reasons (lack of re-supply for health facilities, lack of chlorine and spare parts to repair equipment in water/sewage systems, etc.), and there are pockets of need in outlying villages - particularly with regard to water and sanitation. In addition, there are numerous opportunities for transition initiatives that would have a quick and positive impact on the community. The city is not experiencing an immediate humanitarian emergency, but is faced with chronic vulnerabilities, which threaten to become worse given disruptions to centralized distribution systems and centralized decision making. End Summary.

GOVERNORATE SUPPORT TEAM MEETING

3. The DART participated in two Governorate Support Team (GST) meetings during its visit to Ad Diwaniyah. The GST is currently transitioning from a Marine battalion to an Army Civil Affairs unit. The Marines have been very active in standing up the local government and the justice system; ensuring that water, sewage, and garbage collection are functioning; collecting and disposing of arms and unexploded ordnance (UXOs); and rehabilitating schools.

4. Coalition forces have begun using seized Ba'ath party funds to finance the rehabilitation of the city hall. City hall was thoroughly looted, but only after former-Ba'ath party officials set fire to government documents inside the building. The rehabilitation is focused on one wing of the building and will provide 17 offices and two conference rooms by mid-June. These funds are also being used to rehabilitate a "model school". In the meantime, the GST is soliciting U.S. Department of Defense ODAHCA funds for several projects ranging from support to police units to repair of city sewage systems.

5. There are currently no non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based in Ad Diwaniyah, although Mercy Corps International (MCI) and Solidarites have shown interest in working there (see below).

VISIT TO AD DIWANIYAH PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL

6. Doctors at the Maternal and Child Hospital of Ad Diwaniyah reported that the hospital suffered from a number of problems, including no staff salaries, a lack of some essential drugs and oxygen, cooling system breakdowns, a shortage of fuel for ambulances, and insecurity. However, the hospital's interim director admitted to the DART that many of the hospital's current problems also existed before the war. "We have almost the same problems; the same difficulties," he said. The hospital has 260 beds and 24 specialist doctors, 14 whom are women.

17. The doctors estimated that 70 percent of the 100 to 150 children they treat daily suffer from diarrhea, and about one third of these patients have severe diarrhea. They said this number is comparable to rates of previous years. Doctors said there was adequate supply of water in Ad Diwaniyah, but that the quality was poor, leading to diarrhea problems. Poor rural residents are often forced to obtain water straight from canals. Doctors said there used to be diarrhea-prevention and other health-education messages broadcast on the now-defunct Iraqi television stations.

18. The hospital's nutrition rehabilitation center closed one year ago because deliveries of therapeutic milk and high protein biscuits stopped. A few days ago, CARE delivered 40 cartons of lactose-free milk, biscuits, cheese, blankets, and detergents. Medecins Sans Frontieres-Holland, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and MCI had also visited over the last three weeks. There are approximately 20 to 30 babies born at the hospital each day, though doctors said the majority of babies in Ad Diwaniyah are delivered in special birthing facilities, often with assistance from traditional birth attendants.

19. Doctors said up to 80 percent of their female adult patients had anemia, and that most babies were born underweight. The number of female patients at the hospital has greatly declined since the war because of medication shortages. As a result, admissions at private clinics have increased. Doctors said the hospital's electricity supply was adequate, albeit erratic, and that its immunization program was ongoing. The hospital had telephone communications within Ad Diwaniyah only.

110. Qadisiyah's Minister of Health said that all the hospitals in the governorate would hold departmental elections next week to choose hospital directors, and chiefs of nursing, pharmacies, engineering, and other sections. The Minister also said that the Ministry of Health (MOH) in Baghdad instructed health facilities nationwide to carry out in-house elections.

11. To deal with donations, he said the three hospitals in Ad Diwaniyah had each set up special teams to accept and distribute donated drugs and medical supplies. The governorate drug warehouse is operating, but has not received any drugs from Baghdad since the war. The Minister said it would be preferable to donate drugs directly to the hospitals rather than to the drug warehouse. He added that MOH Baghdad informed him all future MOH drugs would be distributed to health facilities at no cost, and that hospitals would soon be forbidden to charge patients for drugs. Currently, most hospitals charge patients a 30 percent markup to cover their overhead costs.

MCI IN AD DIWANIYAH

112. Team West met with DART cooperative agreement partner MCI in Diwaniyah to discuss potential interventions, including essential drug distribution and water and sanitation activities in and around the city. MCI suggested an integrated health and water and sanitation project could significantly reduce the debilitating childhood diarrhea problem in Ad Diwaniyah and its surrounding villages. MCI has visited Ad Diwaniyah several times, and is now establishing an office there. It will soon send a water and sanitation engineer, a health officer, and support staff to focus on developing and implementing projects.

113. MCI established its first base in neighboring Al Kut rather than in Ad Diwaniyah because the security situation was more permissive there. It said it will coordinate its potential activities closely with city and governorate officials, Solidarites, which will carry out rural water projects, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), Bechtel, the Governorate Support Team, and CARE, which conducts activities in Ad Diwaniyah. ORHA and Bechtel representatives visited water and sewage plants in Ad Diwaniyah Wednesday, and Bechtel expressed interest in improving water and sanitation services in the city.

JUSTICE ISSUES IN AD DIWANIYAH

114. The DART spoke with the Coalition officer who is transitioning out as the justice officer (an army lawyer will be taking over for him). The Coalition officer explained that things are moving along smoothly in the region - approximately 33 judges in Qadisiyah have been recently appointed, 113 criminals have been through the interim justice system in the last three days in Diwaniyah, and a makeshift prison has been established since the original prison was destroyed in the war. His major concern

is the lack of police in town and continued lawlessness, especially in the outlying areas. The military was planning to begin a training of trainers program for police officers the next day. Thus far, approximately 25 recruits will be attending the training. The officer has seen no significant evidence of acts of retribution thus far, but looting sprees and peaceful protests continue. The officer also reported that a small mass grave was found in the former Ba'ath Party security complex. The bodies of 12 men were found bound and blindfolded. According to the officer, his superiors deemed this site a "humanitarian issue" and not evidence of a war crime and turned over the bodies to local religious leaders, who in turn, returned them to their families.

IRAQI RED CRESCENT SOCIETY

15. The DART briefly visited with the Director of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS). IRCS is comprised of eight permanent staff and over 100 volunteers. Most worked throughout the war, assisting war wounded and vulnerable families (including those who lost their homes during the war.) IRCS is not currently working on particular projects because of lack of funds. They are mostly focusing on delivering donations of food, non-food items, and medicine (from ICRC and others) to the local elder care institution, and local hospitals and orphanages. IRCS has forged a very good relationship with MCI and explained that upon the mayor's request, MCI's presence in town was announced on local television and radio.

FOOD

16. The DART met with WFP, representatives from the Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC), and Ministry of Trade (MOT) managers to discuss the public distribution system (PDS) in Qadisiyah governorate and to determine possible bottlenecks that would disrupt the planned 1 June PDS start date. The DART did not identify any major problems in Qadisiyah that would threaten to delay the start date.

17. WFP and the DART are concerned about the stability of the MOT. The MOT has made several personnel changes during the past week, including the removal of the MOT manager. WFP and the DART met with the present, acting manager and are hopeful that he will win the confidence of MOT and will be selected as the permanent manager within the week. Consistent management will be essential during the June distribution.

18. Due to the recent management changes, the emergency USD 20 payment to MOT staff has yet to be delivered. According to the CMOC, the paperwork is complete and payment will be made once the decision of a new manager is made. This should be resolved within the next few days.

19. The CMOC has received several lists from MOT that detail looted or needed equipment for the silo, warehouse, registration center and grain board. CMOC has agreed to review the lists, conduct CMOC assessments at the MOT locations and if viable, submit requests for funding to purchase the items and make the repairs. CMOC is also working with the community to retrieve some of the looted items.

20. The DART briefed the CMOC on the need for properly trained security officers for the MOT facilities and described the CMOC training program in Al Hillah. CMOC representatives will work with MOT and CMOC security to determine if a similar program could include MOT security personnel in Ad Diwaniyah.

21. The DART and CMOC visited two grain storage sites that had been identified as viable wheat supplies for the PDS. According to WFP, these sites hold an estimated 60,000 metric tons of wheat grain. The quality and age of this grain is uncertain, but CMOC agreed to follow-up with MOT to inventory the grain and have it tested for suitability for human consumption. If the grain is deemed safe for human consumption, it could be used for some of the wheat ration in June. According to WFP, this is Iraqi wheat purchased by the Grain Board.

22. WFP confirmed the food stock numbers at Ad Diwaniyah and determined there would be a shortage of pulses and oil. WFP will try and obtain these commodities from surrounding governorate overstocks. The total June distribution cycle for Qadisiyah is 15 days.

23. WFP will work with several feeding programs to provide food for the orphanage, an elderly home, a mentally disabled home and several hospitals. The total rations for these feedings will be 864.

¶24. WFP stated that the MOT understands that some people were punished by having their names stricken from the PDS roles. The MOT plans to re-register these people so that they can receive PDS rations in June. The MOT will also ensure that those who have lost their ration cards or had them confiscated for reasons of punishment will be included in the June ration.

¶25. WFP staff conducted a taste test on the navy white bean provided for distribution. The results of this test was "Good smell and tasty."

JONES